

In this Issue:

- NSC Alliance Members Invited to Interact With Lawmakers This Summer
- 2017 Appropriations a Mixed Bag for Science
- House Approves NSF Reform Bill
- Nominations Sought for Collections Research Uses Working Group
- Top Museums Encouraged to Apply for National Medal
- Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest
- Fellowship Opportunity at Smithsonian Institution

Through the NSC Alliance partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, we are pleased to provide NSC Alliance members with the following public policy update. With proper attribution to NSC Alliance, all material from these reports may be reproduced or forwarded. We encourage you to share this report with colleagues at your institution. Anyone interested in receiving copies of the NSC Alliance Washington Report may subscribe at www.NSCAlliance.org -- it's free!

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding any of the following items, please contact NSC Alliance director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500 x 250 or at rgropp@aibs.org.

NSC Alliance Members Invited to Interact With Lawmakers This Summer

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is pleased to announce that it is joining with the American Institute of Biological Sciences to sponsor the 8th Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event. The event is not limited to biological scientists—all natural science collection scientists are encouraged to participate.

This national initiative is an opportunity for scientists across the country to meet with their federal or state elected officials to showcase the people, facilities, and equipment that are required to support and conduct scientific research.

There is a pressing need for the scientific community to engage with policymakers about the value of natural history collections in research and education. As called for in the recent report from the Biodiversity Collections Network, “The community must do a better job of communicating outcomes and benefits of digitization efforts to policymakers, administrators, other scientists, and the public.”

NSC Alliance is pleased to be playing a leadership role in fostering these efforts by sponsoring this event.

The Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event enables scientists and graduate students to meet with their elected officials without traveling to Washington, DC. Participants may either invite an elected official to tour their research facility or can meet at the lawmaker's local office. Meetings will take place between mid-July and October, depending on the participant's schedule.

NSC Alliance members who participate will receive one-on-one support and online training to prepare them for their tour or meeting.

Participation is free for NSC Alliance members, but registration will close on July 17, 2016. To register, visit https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html.

2017 Appropriations a Mixed Bag for Science

Fiscal year 2017 is shaping up to be a year of haves and have-nots for science programs.

Several research programs would receive funding increases if legislation moving through Congress were enacted. Both chambers are considering proposals to increase funding for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative by \$25 million, the Advance Research Projects Agency-Energy by at least \$15 million, and the Smithsonian Institution by at least \$16 million.

Legislation moving through both chambers would provide an additional \$50 million to the Department of Energy's Office of Science. Funding for the Biological and Environmental Research program, however, would increase by \$1 million in the Senate bill and decline by \$14 million in the House bill.

The Senate is also advancing legislation to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health by \$2 billion and a \$1 million increase for the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The House has not released its version of the bill.

Among the research agencies and programs that could experience budget cuts are the Agricultural Research Service (at least \$104 million cut), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (at least \$74 million cut), and the Environmental Protection Agency (at least \$31 million cut).

Future funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) is less clear, with the House proposing a \$57 million cut and the Senate Appropriations panel pushing for \$46 million in additional funding in 2017. A key difference between the proposals is the impact on research funding. The House version would boost NSF research funds—in spite of an overall reduction for the agency. The Senate would cut research funding and direct new funding to the construction of ocean research vessels.

Congress is making better progress on appropriations this year than in recent years. The Senate is leading the House of Representatives in drafting and approving the twelve appropriations bills

that collectively fund the federal government. The Senate panel has approved eleven bills, as compared to nine in the lower chamber. This is considerably faster than this time last year.

Progress on appropriations can partly be attributed to forthcoming national elections. With the presidential nominating conventions in July, Congress will be recessing several weeks earlier than usual for their summer break.

It remains to be seen, however, whether the bills can be passed, reconciled, and sent to the President. This would, indeed, represent a significant departure from recent history where legislation stalled during the summer and the fall fight was over how many continuing resolutions and omnibus spending plans should be passed.

House Approves NSF Reform Bill

Legislation that would overhaul management of large research projects at the National Science Foundation (NSF) was passed by the House of Representatives. H.R. 5049 would require the agency to conduct an audit of all projects with a price tag of \$100 million or more. The bill was supported by 412 Representatives, with 9 opposed.

The legislation was motivated by concerns about management of the National Ecological Observatory Network. Management of the project was changed to the Battelle Memorial Institute, a nonprofit research and development organization, in March 2016 due to concerns about cost overruns and construction delays.

NSF has “serious concerns” about the legislation. “NSF already has rigorous oversight, reporting and control processes regarding its major facilities, and is currently implementing internal standard operating guidance to further clarify and codify these processes. Further, NSF abides by existing regulations that provide consistency across the federal government,” the agency said in a statement.

Nominations Sought for Collections Research Uses Working Group

The Biodiversity Collections Network is seeking nominations/applications for members of a new working group on next generation research uses of digitized collections. The group will consider the opportunities, needs, and limitations to next generation research uses of digitized specimens and their associated data. Learn more and apply to participate at <https://bcon.aibs.org/working-groups/bcon-next-generation-research-working-group/>.

Top Museums Encouraged to Apply for National Medal

Nominations are sought for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. This annual award is presented by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and recognizes libraries and museums that make significant and exceptional contributions in service to their communities.

Anyone can nominate an institution, including an employee, board member, or member of the public. Nominations must be submitted by October 3, 2016.

Several NSC Alliance member organizations have previously received this prestigious award.

Learn more at <https://www.imls.gov/node/7488/>.

Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest

Turn your photo of research or science education into a tool for public outreach. Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest, which recognizes scientists who use imagery to communicate aspects of biological research to the public and policymakers.

Photographs entered into the competition must depict a person, such as a scientist, technician, or student, engaging in biological research. The research may occur outside, in a lab, at a natural history collection, at a field station, on a computer, in a classroom, or anywhere else research is done.

The First Place Winner will have his/her winning photo featured on the cover of *BioScience*, and will receive \$250 and a one year membership in the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), including a subscription to *BioScience*. The Second and Third Place Winners will have his/her winning photo printed inside the journal, and will receive a one year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to *BioScience*.

Submissions must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on September 30, 2016.

For more information or to enter the contest, visit <http://www.aibs.org/public-programs/photocontest.html>.

Fellowship Opportunity at Smithsonian Institution

The National Museum of Natural History is offering a fellowship for graduate students, post-doctoral and professional researchers. The program provides an opportunity to conduct independent research and to collaborate with Smithsonian scientists. Fellows have access to the world's largest natural and cultural history collections. The fellowship is open to both U.S. and non-U.S. citizens. Learn more at <http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/fellowship-program-flyer.pdf>.

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit association that serves as an advocate for natural science collections, the institutions that preserve them, and the research and education that extend from them for the benefit of science, society, and stewardship

of the environment. NSC Alliance members are part of an international community of museums, botanical gardens, herbariums, universities, and other institutions that house natural science collections and utilize them in research, exhibitions, academic and informal science education, and outreach activities. Website: www.NSCAlliance.org.

The NSC Alliance Washington Report is a publication of the NSC Alliance. For information about membership in the NSC Alliance, please contact spotter@aibs.org.